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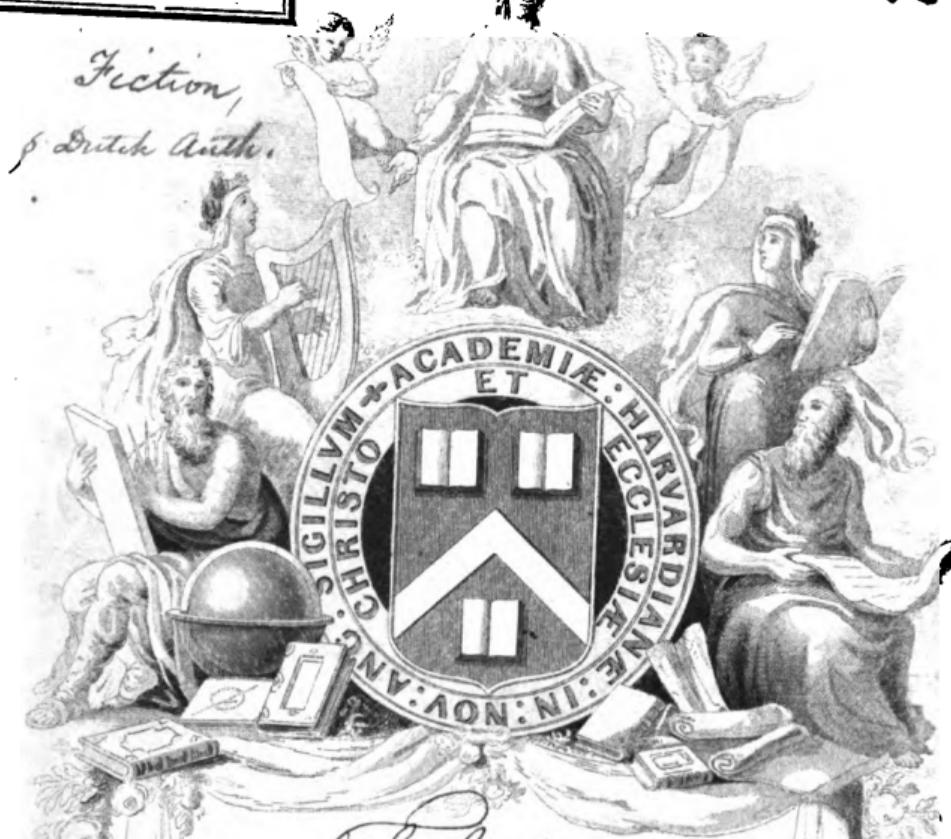
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No. XI.

F A S H I O N,

OR

SISKA VAN ROOSEMAEL.



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FASHION;

OR

SISKA VAN ROOSEMAEL.



FROM THE FLEMISH OF
HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.

With 30 Illustrations.

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FASHION,
OR,
SISKA VAN ROOSEMAEL.

CHAPTER I.

BURGHERS OF THE OLD SCHOOL—SWINDLERS OF THE NEW.



FOR many years ago, you might have seen, in one of the streets behind the green churchyard of Antwerp, a famous old grocer's shop, which, through many generations, had de-

scended from father to son, and always been conspicuous for good wares and low prices. The last proprietor of the shop was James Van Roosemael, son of Frank, son of Charles, son of Gaspard Van Roosemael; and had married Siska Pot, a descendant of the famous Peter Pot, whose name is still to be met with in the two Peter Pot streets.*

This wedded pair, trained from early youth to a life of industry, and now unremittingly busied with their

* Peter Pot, a nobleman, in 1433, founded at Antwerp, the monastery of S. Salvator, which was commonly called the monastery of Peter Pot; and in 1575, burned down. The numerous descendants of this nobleman, for the greatest part now humble burghers, are called the "Pots," (Potten.)



small trade, had never found time to take part in the progress of modern civilization; or, in other words, to make themselves *fashionable* folks. Their dress, made of stout cloth, was plain, and hardly ever changed its cut; they merely distinguished working-dress, Sunday-dress, and Easter-dress. The latter was never taken from the cupboard but on the great holidays, and when the Van Roosemaels took the Holy Communion, or were invited by friends, as god-parents or marriage guests. It was easily to be seen, that these simple people of the old Flemish world, in their quaint though valuable dress, looked rather strangely if compared



with many a beau, who, for a few dollars, had decked himself out in a fine showy dress, and would, in passing, regard the Van Roosemaels with disdain. But they did not mind it, and thought, "Every man has his own point to gain;—you the shadow, we the substance." They were sufficiently uneducated not to know that gentlefolks do not dine at noon; and they therefore were vulgar enough to sit down to dinner when the clock struck twelve; yea, more, they never forgot to say grace both before and after dinner. But there were other imperfections with which they might also be charged: for instance, they

did not understand a word of French, and had never felt the want of this accomplishment; they were religious, industrious, humble, and, above all, peaceable. But the height of their stupidity was, that they, in their Flemish simplicity, considered it better every day to lay by an honest stiver, than, by lies and fraud, to amass such riches in a few years, that all the world should exclaim with astonishment, “Where did he find so much money!” In a word, they were Flemish burghers of the old school.

The old Van Roosemael had a young daughter, called Siska, after her mother, of the age of fifteen,



tall and slender for her years, with handsome figure and features, fair hair and blue eyes,—a genuine charming Brabantish child. She had been educated at a common town school, knew her native language well, and had an excellent plain education, besides understanding all that sort of work which a good burgher's wife ought to understand, if it be only to know something more about domestic management than her servant. Like her parents, she was simple, pious, obedient, affectionate; not boisterous, idle, or self-willed; but in every way calculated to maintain, with the man she should marry, the hon-

or and renown of the house of her ancestors, and to carry on the famous grocery shop.

How is it, that now the shop of a hundred years' standing, is closed? What mishap befell Van Roosemael's vats, boxes, flasks, pots, and pitchers, and transferred them to the broker's shop? The following story will tell you how and why.

But first let me inform you, that there lived, in the immediate neighborhood of our shopkeeper, a master-shoemaker, who was Van Roosemael's best friend. With him he would stroll of an evening to the stone bridge,* play a game of back-

* A favorite walk of the Antwerp people.

gammon with him, and, like a true brother, know of no pleasure without him. But a sudden change took place, from singular reasons.

The shoemaker, who had hitherto made a nice living, and, by wise economy, bought the house he lived in, one fine day, when Van Roosemael was fever-ill, had knocked his two street windows into one large show front; upon the glass panes of which he had painted, in gaudy colors, various French recommendations of his goods. In the middle you might read, "*A la botte sans couture;*" "*Magasin de bottes et souliers de Paris;*"*—a falsehood, be-

* "At the sign of the boot without a seam;" "Dépôt of Paris boots and shoes."

cause he intended, as heretofore, to manufacture the boots and shoes himself. Underneath, you saw the picture of a man, whose eyes were



dazzled from the reflection of the sun upon a polished boot; and beneath this masterpiece of puffing, the words were written, "*Véritable*

*cirage Anglais!"**—another falsehood, for that was also home-made, with the difference only, that he now charged four times its former price. The corner pane bore the inscription, “*Souliers en caoutchuc, poudre de savon, semelles de liège, etc.*”†

When Van Roosemael had recovered from his illness, and was walking at a slow pace through the street, his glance fell with surprise on the new window of the shoemaker. He stopped suddenly, rubbed his eyes like a drowsy man, and looked musingly over the whole

* “Genuine English blacking.”

† “India-rubber shoes, soap powder, cork soles, &c.”

range of houses in the street, like a stranger who has lost his way.

“ What is the meaning of that,” thought he ; “ surely that is not Spinael’s shop ?—can he have changed his abode without my knowing it ? Most probably another of those fellows who come here with the intention of swindling ; and, by throwing dust into people’s eyes, to have a better plea for bankruptcy, if the sheep are shorn. But he shan’t catch me—”

Whilst Van Roosemael stood musing, there stepped a gentleman from the interior of the shop to the door. He was showily dressed in a paletot of checkered cloth, drab-colored

trowsers, and white waistcoat; he wore a mosaic gold chain, to which a watch, or eyeglass, was supposed



to be attached. Crisp and beautifully black whiskers surrounded his face; his hair was artificially dress-

ed, like that of the wax-figures seen in barbers' windows. In short, he was in the height of the fashion.

“Ah!” Van Roosemael thought, “that is he, a fine fellow, indeed!” But the new neighbor went straight up to him, tapped him on the shoulder, and said:—

“Recovered! friend Van Roosemael?”

The astounded man recognised the voice of Spinael, reeled back two steps, regarded his friend from top to toe, and, with much simplicity, said:—

“How very fine you look! Have you won a great prize in the lottery? or have you inherited some

property ? If so, God prosper you ; I congratulate you from all my heart. Well, I never—How curious !—But all my lifetime I thought your hair was red !”

Spinael smiled with a kind of contemptuous pity, and answered in that frivolous, easy manner, usually termed the “best style.”

“Van Roosemael, friend, *you* never will become a rich man. The world has changed ; nobody, now-a-days, will be caught without chaff and limed twigs ; bad wares nicely laid out, are half sold. He who is obliged to make his living out of Flemish burghers, must plod his way to old age, before he can say,—‘I

am a made man!' You are too stingy, friend, and demand good leather, and good work for small pay. 'Tis quite another thing with our young fashionables; there, business is to be done;—every month a new pair of boots, dearly paid and easily made."

The astounded Van Roosemael did not know whether he was awake or asleep. He had a singing in his ears from these strange words, and he was half inclined to think that Spinael had lost his senses.

"But," interrupting him, he said, "I have been told that these fashionable gentry often forget to pay.

Do you take good care; several of these chaps are in my books; and you may shear long where there is no wool. Better a small, honest gain, and a clear conscience."

"Antiquated talk, friend!" said the shoemaker; "we will talk over the same matter in some two or three years' time, and then we shall see who has fared best. My son Jules is in Paris, to get a thorough knowledge of his business; I have some expectations of him."

"Who do you say is in Paris? Jules? Why I always thought I was godfather to your only son, and his name was John, like mine."

“ Well, then, John is in Paris; only he has changed his vulgar name for Jules, which sounds much finer. And my daughter, who went into the fashionable boarding-school this week, is now called Hortense.



I merely tell you, that you may not call them John and Theresa in the presence of my customers.”

Van Roosemael doubtfully shook

his head, looked alternately at the inscriptions on the window and the many-colored habiliments of his friend, and said, in a half-joking tone,—

“I do not believe, Spinael, that you are on the right path! I have seen many a man tumble, who formerly had stood his ground firmly. Yet every one may do what he thinks proper; your concerns are not mine; let us, therefore, drop the subject! By-the-by, do you not forget that this morning the meeting of the fraternity of our Blessed Virgin takes place? You will be present, I hope?”

“Fraternity of our Blessed Vir-

gin!" Spinael exclaimed; "I have ceased to be a member. You cannot expect a man like me, who works for the grand theatre, to follow the procession, taper in hand. How queer it would look, 'pon my honor!"

"Good-by, then," Van Roosemael said, mournfully, leaving the fashionable shoemaker.

Some time after this conversation, Spinael came to the grocer, and after boasting of the excellent progress his business was making, spoke of a large supply of leather, which he should like to buy from a tanner, who was involved in difficulties.

He called it a “brilliant affair;” and, by dint of his newly-acquired tricks, managed to induce the unsuspecting man, mindful of their long friendship, to lend him five hundred guilders, to be paid back in three months. At the same time, he had his measure taken for a new pair of shoes. After an eight days’ wear the shoes had lost the soles; and in lieu of his five hundred guilders, the grocer got many fine words and endless promises.

This last transaction brought about a coldness between the two neighbours, and, after a time, when they happened to meet, they ceased to

salute each other. But this feeling did not communicate itself to their children, who continued on friendly terms.



CHAPTER II.

GOOD ADVICE, BAD RESOLVE.



INCE the return of Spinael's daughter from the school, Siska Van Roosemael had lost much of her artless demeanor. In the shop of the shoe dépôt, she had too often seen how the fashionable young men discoursed frivolously, and took liberties with her friend ; who was not a whit behind them in pertness and effrontery,—and all in the soft-toned, love-breathing, French tongue ! Too

inexperienced to know what impure feelings lay concealed beneath such false love-speeches, she more than once blushed, when one or the other of these young fops addressed her in broken French, she could not answer like her friend. This was the reason why she daily urged her mother to send her to the same boarding-school. Mrs. Van Roosemael, who loved her daughter but too tenderly, had also perceived, and not without some envy, that Hortense, or rather Theresa Spinael, ill-favored though she was, attracted all eyes, while her poor Siska made little show by the side of the dashing shoemaker's daughter. The

mother's pride could no longer endure that her child should be neglected and eclipsed by one who was by far her inferior. After having importuned her husband with all sorts of representations for nearly three months, the resolution was taken to send Siska to the fashionable boarding-school, but not without having first asked old Pelkmans' advice in this important matter.

This Pelkmans was the physician of the family, as his father had been to Van Roosemael's. Often in cases of difficulty, had his wise counsel served the grocer; but that which rendered him, above all, so dear to both parents, was his having thrice

saved Siska from certain death; twice when attacked by a contagious disorder, and latterly by the cholera. In their gratitude they had admitted that the doctor had thereby acquired some right over the life and the future prospects of their daughter; and they resolved, accordingly, never to act in her behalf without first asking his advice. And they were right in doing so; for old Pelkmans really was a sagacious and learned man, who knew the ways of the world, and who examined and investigated all things with Flemish circumspection.

On the appointed day, the doctor, with the father and mother Van

Roosemael, were sitting in a back room; and the conversation was commenced by Van Roosemael in the following manner:—

“Dr. Pelkmans, my wife wants, by all means, to have our Siska sent to a fashionable boarding-school. As far as I am concerned, I was always strongly opposed to it; but the tears of the girl have at last softened my heart.”

“To a fashionable boarding-school?” the doctor asked, with surprise; “to a fashionable boarding-school? Why, there are plenty of good schools in town; and there you have ready access to watch that the little lamb does not go astray.”

“Pooh! pooh!” exclaimed the

mother, laughing contemptuously ; “what knowledge is to be acquired in these town schools ? To knit, to sew, to mark linen, to make shirts, arithmetic, and Flemish, which everybody knows of course. Now, look at Spinael’s daughter!—she left home a sloven, and returned a lady : she speaks French, is liked by everybody, and her company courted by all the fine young gentlemen. She has merely to choose whom she will be happy with.”

The doctor shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head doubtfully. “ You grieve me, Mrs. Van Roose-mael. I know not what evil spirit is moving you, so suddenly distort-

ing your sound judgment. The fine gentlemen you speak of are a few tailors, comedians, and hungry scribblers, who throng to the boot-maker's like flies to the sugar-loaf. I know Hortense Spinael; and I



assure you I would give half my fortune to prevent Siska becoming like her. Do you want to spoil that beautiful and innocent child; to make her fall from religion, virtue, and Flemish uprightness, and render

her a frivolous coquette? Be on your guard! My advice will, perhaps, be useless; but the time will come when you will rue this step, if we live long enough to see it."

Both parents were struck, though in a different way, by the doctor's earnest words. Both of them smiled; the father from joy, hoping that the doctor would gain the day; the mother from anger. She did not, however, give way, but exclaimed:—"You are exaggerating, doctor. I know well that you bear a great hatred to every thing fashionable; but we are of the old world, friend. It won't do now-a-days."

"Mrs. Van Roosemael," said the

doctor, interrupting her, "you won't understand me. It is not my intention to hinder anybody from acquiring foreign languages; this you may see in the case of my own son Lewis, who is now at the university. Does he not understand French? I should say so; and a good deal better than the young ignoramuses who turn Theresa Spinael's head, and dazzle your eyes so very much. Do not look at me, madam, with such an air of defiance. Yes, they are ignoramuses; for what does their knowledge consist in? Some French sentences, picked up in the street, which they often bungle lamentably enough. They do not

know their native language; and they are ignorant of the very names of the most useful sciences. All their learning consists in words and phrases which they now and then pick up in newspapers and novels. These they concoct into empty, idle talk, and palm it on the uninformed for cultivation. But you really make me quite angry; we are wandering from the point. Let us come to an understanding. I will tell you —and mark my words! There are, no doubt, good educational establishments; but there are far more bad than good ones. The good ones are those conducted by ladies, who, conscious of the holiness of

their calling, have a better end in view than to give to their charges a shining worldly varnish, at the expense of their piety and morals; where the teachers assiduously co-operate and watch incessantly to guard against the poison of temptation, and to combat vanity and frivolity; where there is a due appreciation of the good qualities that have their root in a true religious sentiment, and a perception of the danger of giving up this pure ground to improper and fashionable influence:—in a word, where they do not wish to form fine ladies, but good and useful housewives. If you should now propose to send your

Siska to such an establishment, I should be the last to object; on the contrary, I should be very glad of it. But every thing depends on the choice you are going to make. I know full well that many fashionable boarding-schools are mere schools of frivolity and dissipation; good ones, however, are still to be found, if one does not mind the trouble of looking about. I am prepared to name such an establishment to you, —that of X—, for instance."

"The boarding-school of X—, to be sure!" the mother cried; "I thought so! No! Siska might just as well remain at home. There is Anna Van Straten, who was at this

establishment; and three years afterwards returned as she went. She certainly is a good and well-behaved



girl; experienced, I am told, in every household duty; but qualities like those may be acquired everywhere, and for such there is no need

of going to a fashionable boarding-school."

"And what, pray, is the purpose of going there at all? I see; in order to be made fashionable. Am I right? To bring home frivolity and dissipation, like Theresa Spinael; to dress above her station in life; and, to everybody's scandal, to show herself off like a fashionable doll and coquette."

"But how is it, doctor," asked Van Roosemael, "if the greater number of fashionable boarding-schools thus ruin the children, how is it, that all the wealthy people—who are surely not so stupid—send their children there?"

“Do not misunderstand me, my friends,” the old doctor continued, more calmly; “every class of society has its peculiar customs. What is right and good for the child of a millionaire or rich man, may be injurious and actually hurtful for the child of a shopkeeper. The chief injury to the girls in such establishments is, that the same ideas and habits are taught the daughter of an humble tradesman, as are taught the daughter of the wealthiest merchant; and that she, whose destiny is useful industry, is educated and brought up like one, the sole and great object of whose life will be, to use her faculties to avert the *ennui* insepara-

ble from a life of pleasure. Thus human society is thoroughly spoiled; now every girl will be a lady; and, with gay clothes, come indolence, laziness, extravagance, coquetry, and something worse. Fine ladies and coquettes are educated in plenty; but of industrious, chaste, Flemish housewives, not one!"

Here Father Van Roosemael at once rose from his chair, and said emphatically — "Enough, enough! You are too good, doctor, to squander your words on this point. You are perfectly right; and Siska shall either go to the boarding-school of X—, or remain at home;—else I am not master here. And you,

woman, be off with your French! One would suppose that we were going backwards, because we only speak our native language! I say, good is good; and whoever will make good better, I call him a stupid blockhead! In one word, Siska shall remain at home."

But the honest man had reckoned without his host, or, rather, without his wife, who exclaimed angrily:—"Oh! oh! not so quick, Van Roosemael! You seem to have a great many notes to your song to-day. Sit down, man, and do not put yourself in a passion. Now come, doctor, pray tell me, would it be so heinous an offence in our

Siska, if she was to be as well educated, and spoke as good French, as the richest merchant's daughter ? Would she be one whit the worse for it ?"

From this question, the doctor learned that he had to combat a fixed resolve and a woman's self-will. He therefore changed his tone, and, with greater emphasis, replied:—"By no means, if she acquired nothing but good manners and useful knowledge; but you have no idea, mother, what strange things the girls of such establishments learn from their teachers and one another. Mark, then; and be sure they are mournful truths which I

am going to tell you. French, certainly, is taught there ; but, along with the French language, other things are taught not quite so com-



mendable ; — for instance, how to turn the eyes, to smooth the face, to point the mouth, in order to appear charming and amiable ; to impose

upon the parents, for the sake of a romantic—that is to say, a secret—amour; to fill the head with soul and body poisoning pictures of passion; how to use all sorts of perfumes; to curl the hair *à la neige*, *en tirebouchons*, or *à la Chinoise*; to dress *en négligé*, *en robe de ville*, and *en costume de bal*; to bend and bow according to the rank of people;—low to a rich man, hardly, if at all, to a burgher, and by no means to the common people. French songs are taught; which, under the name of romances, excite the passions, and infuse the poison of licentiousness into the mind of a young girl. Is this the knowledge which be-

comes a Christian child, the daughter of a burgher?"

The doctor perceived, with joy, that his words had made a deep impression upon his hearers; and they really fixed their eyes steadfastly upon him; they were quite motionless, as if the deep feeling of the speaker had crushed them entirely. Determined to save from ruin the child which he loved so dearly, he continued more emphatically still:—
“And by the over-excitement of an unnatural, and insatiable impulse, the heart of such young girls become dry and empty; they call their parents grumblers of the old school, if they marry, their husband appears

to them a tedious, heartless destroyer of their happiness, because he does not resemble the knights and squires of their imagination; they are incapable of loving him sincerely, and make a sacrifice of every principle of decency and good faith. Would to God you knew the nest whence all these nice things spring! Did you only know what ungodliness and immorality this fashionable world is made of, in whose manners you wish to have your daughter instructed! Look at Theresa, or Hortense Spinael! What else is she but a frivolous coquette, who flirts with fifty depraved young men at once; who has her ears filled

with vicious conversation, and listens daily to things, which, even with my gray hair, would raise a blush upon my cheeks!—a gay woman, who already has lost her good name. And what will become of her? She would make her fortune, you say! Oh! no, she will play with fire until she burns herself, and so will end her course of folly. Despised and shunned by everybody, she will at best drag on her miserable existence in tears; and mourn, too late, the loss of her honor forever sullied. Alas! my friends, is this the fate you will prepare for your only child, your good Siska? Could you dare, hereafter, to appear

before your Lord and God, having trifled away the eternal salvation of your daughter, the purity of her heart, for the apish tricks of modern fashion? Will you deliver up your child to a life of remorse, to the pangs of conscience; and see her weep bitter tears over the loss of her honor and virtue? Oh! say no! I implore you!"

Here Van Roosemael burst into tears; he tried to speak, but so deeply was he affected by the representation of Siska's possible fate, that his full heart stifled his voice. He rose, caught the doctor's hand, and exclaimed:—"Thanks, many thanks, my dear friend! your wise



advice shall be followed. I clearly see my wife would have Siska at Hortense Spinael's school; but I won't hear one word more about it; mind this, wife, or you shall repent your obstinacy!"

His voice betrayed so much anguish of the heart, that his wife, feeling that he was in earnest, quietly replied:—" You need not make so much noise about it. Let Siska remain at home, and do you see, yourself, what you can make of her!"

These words grieved the doctor sorely; he perceived that Mrs. Van Roosemael was not yet convinced, and tried anew, by urgent represen-

tations, to change her dangerous design. At last he seemed to have succeeded; and he took his leave with feelings of joy, not unmixed with grief.

Three months had passed; when, one fine day, the doctor met Van Roosemael. The poor man looked in great despondency; and, contrary to his custom, walked rather slowly, as if he had just left the sick-bed. He walked up to him, and, feeling his pulse, said:—"You are not ill, I hope, old friend? But quite right you are not; your pulse is very slow; what is the matter?"

The good Van Roosemael looked up; two tears rolled down his

cheeks, and he groaned:—"Siska is in the boarding-school!"

"Well, I do not see much harm in that! Tell me only in which?"

"In the same which Hortense Spinael was in. Do not be angry with me, friend Pelkmans, it is not my fault! The devil was setting my household in an uproar for two months, till I consented; but I could bear no longer to see mother and daughter pouting and sobbing away; I fretted myself quite thin about it."

The doctor's heart ached at this communication; he pitied his friend, and smilingly replied:—"Friend Van Roosemael, the old Greeks write of

a fabulous hero, whom they call Hercules, that he performed many gigantic labors,—split rocks, turned the course of streams, broke the neck of wild bulls, strangled serpents, and even killed a seven-headed dragon;—but that in all his life he had changed one woman's mind, nobody dared write of him. How, therefore, should we be able to do so ? Do you compose yourself; for I at the time painted it in the blackest colors ; it won't turn out so badly, I hope ; and Siska, besides, will come home twice a year, when we may check the evil in time, if it shows itself."

The father, comforted and pleased,

gratefully pressed the doctor's hands;
and went on his way, with a mended
pace.





CHAPTER III.

HIGH SOAR, DEEP FALL.



ISKA had entered the es-

tablishment with a neat suit of clothes, as it becomes a burgher's daughter, and with a trunk well stocked with new linen; but it was not long ere she began, in fine words and under various pretexts, in her letters to ask for money. Her first letter was worded as follows:—

“MY DEAR, WELL-BELOVED MAMMA,—

“I am the worst dressed in the whole school; the other young ladies laugh at me, and call me a country girl. I do nothing but weep, from sheer sorrow; and I certainly shall become ill, if you, my best mamma, do not pity your poor unhappy child. The daughter of the

barber who shaves papa, is here; and she has got fine silk dresses, like the others. I alone walk about in my plain cotton dress, and have neither bonnet nor *bottines*; the consequence of which is, that I become quite crooked, because in my wretchedness I am continually looking to the ground. I am pale and meager; and I shall soon be sick, my dear mamma. I read *Télémaque*, and already dance so gracefully, that the other ladies are quite jealous about it.

“ My compliments to papa.

“ Until death,

“ Your faithful daughter,

“ EUDOXIA VAN ROOSEMAEL.”

The mother did not dare to show this letter to her husband; she saw plainly, that the ominous signs of the mischief, which Doctor Pelkmans had hinted at, lay concealed beneath. The frivolous tone which pervaded the letter, could not be mistaken; and the conclusion appeared to be borrowed from a love-letter. With great pain, too, she endeavored to find out the meaning of the word "Eudoxia," till she came to the conclusion that it was a translation of her Christian name, Siska. Touched, however, by the complaints of her daughter, she sent twice as much money as she could have expected. This was done

more than once: Siska already knew the art of fabricating so-called *white* lies; and, through their instrumentality, to squeeze her mother's love like a sponge. One might wonder at so rapid a change. But was the child singular? Had she not, in her school-fellows, more than a hundred teachers, who, by precept and example, instructed her in the precious arts of indolence and luxury? Alas! this part of her fashionable education had but too well succeeded. The first month, she had a silk gown in the newest fashion; the second, a silk bonnet with flowers; the third, a parasol; the fourth, a gown that exposed her

neck; in the fifth, she began to use pomatum and milk of almonds, and kept a small box, wherein she now and then dipped her fingers, to tinge her blooming cheeks with shameless rouge, merely to try how it would look. Was not this a respectable education, befitting a burgher's daughter? No doubt it was!

But the sixth month rapidly approached, and the holidays with it. What will the doctor say if he sees Siska so richly attired; with scented hair, pointed lips, and simpering face? Will he not look through her heart, and recognise the germ of ruin growing up rankly? To be sure he would! But when Siska

was on the eve of starting, her mother took her aside, and gave her this advice :—“ See that you are prudent, Siska ; and when you come home to spend your holidays with us, do not be too wild or haughty ; for if Doctor Pelkmans sees that, your father is sure not to let you return.”

These words had not fallen on a deaf ear. Siska and her companions had often laughed at the idea, and thought of contrivances how to cheat Doctor Pelkmans.

Thus, one afternoon she alighted with her mother, who had come to fetch her, before the door of the shop. But is this really Siska, the

Siska that we know? Verily, we were mistaken: there she is, wearing a plain modest gown; her hair is uncurled, no bonnet, no pomatum; with bent head and cast-down eyes! One might suppose her to be the most shy, retired child in the world. The doctor speaks to her, to sound her; she answers him so simply, so modestly, and in so few words, that he recants his reproaches; and Siska is permitted to return to the boarding-school.

Whilst Van Roosemael's daughter was receiving her fashionable education, things did not all go on well in Spinael's shop and household. The young fashionable gen-

lemen very rarely paid their debts; and, at the close of each theatrical season, the comedians bolted, well provided with unpaid-for boots and shoes. Hortense, too, squandered away a goodly sum in dress and delicacies;—probably she now and then gave something secretly to her needy lovers. In a word, Spinael got over head and ears in debt; his house was already loaded with heavy mortgages.

In this mournful position the shoemaker's eyes gradually opened; the picture, with the bright boot dazzling the spectator, lay torn in the lumber-room; and only one inscription was to be seen on the window-

pane, in French and Flemish,—“Dépôt of shoes.” But the Flemish customers had forgotten the way to his gaudy shop: the shoes that had so soon given way, remained heavily in their memory; and Spinael, with his paletot, his fancy trowsers, and pinchbeck chain, did not know any longer from what bird to feather his arrows: he was, in fact, a ruined man.

Evil is naturally despotic. When once it has found its way to the heart, and has there met with friendly welcome, it insists on being the sole occupant, and extirpates, root and branch, all the virtues that found a lodging within. Nothing can with-

stand its incessant attacks. It drives every feeling of duty and probity from its domicil, and takes possession of the entire man as of a slave. Spinael made this experience in a dreadful manner. Overwhelmed with debts, poor and miserable, he mourned his frivolity, and only hoped to find consolation in the sympathy of his daughter. But from her he received nothing but abusive reproaches; and, in spite of the want which oppressed him, the abandoned Hortense still continued squandering and contracting debts, only to gratify her luxurious habits.

A short time afterwards, John, or rather Jules Spinael, as he now

called himself, returned from Paris. But, instead of sitting down upon the shoemaker's bench, and helping his unhappy father in his difficulties, the rascal would do nothing but dress smartly, lounge at coffee-houses, billiard-tables, smoke cigars, and talk big in French. He entered into a base alliance with his sister against their weak father; they sold the paternal house, and commenced, under his very eyes, to spend, in a life of pleasure, the trifling sum which remained from the purchase-money, after the mortgages were discharged. By-and-by Spinael became so poor, that even his appearance betrayed the fact.

His elbows would be seen through the sleeves; he looked shabby and



dirty, for he even lacked the courage of trying to hide his misery.

But his children, in spite of all, were still handsomely dressed, and continued their life of dissipation with unblushing impudence. They, no doubt, had laid by part of the money for their own use; and, degenerate as they were, refused now to let their father participate in it.

One Sunday, when Spinael, ashamed of his ragged garments, had not had courage to go to church, but remained at home, with tearful eye and with bent down head, musing in sad dejection on his past life, and the disgraceful conduct of his children, a young gentleman (whether he was a tailor or a nobleman, his appearance did not betray) entered

the room, and asked for Jules and Hortense Spinael. He took the afflicted man for a servant of the house, and, in ill-spoken French, said:—"Run, fellow, and tell Mr. Jules and Miss Hortense, that we are ready to start!"

The astounded Spinael looked motionless at the stranger, who harshly assailed him with, "Will you hasten to announce me, impudent rascal?" These words he had picked up in the last vaudeville that had been performed at the theatre.

Spinael grew deadly pale and trembled violently, his eyes shot fire at the intruder, who, however, greatly irritated, raised his walking-

stick, and menacingly exclaimed:—
“ Wretch, I shall beat you!”



A furious cry burst from Spinael's breast; he jumped up, grasped a strap, struck the stranger in the face with it, and threw him into the street, before he had time to say a

word. Then, still shaking with the violent excitement, he shut the street door, and rushed upstairs to his children. Long had he lost the courage to reproach them: but now, when indignation filled him, he dared to upbraid them with the whole infamy of their behavior.

He found them *en grande tenue*, with parasol and cane in hand, ready, they said, to join a pleasure party in a trip to Brussels. The reproaches of their father were fierce and bitter; but these undutiful children heard them with contempt. The more the father's anger increased, the more impudent grew the children; and when they had

derided him for some moments, they sneeringly wished him good-morning, and stepped towards the door. The father, excited to blind rage by this climax of undutifulness, rushed before the door, to prevent their egress, and exclaimed, "Vipers that you are! It is not enough that you have made me a beggar, but you will kill me now with your scorn!—not enough that you have squandered the fruits of my hard labor in disgraceful pleasures, whilst, like a beggar, I perish for want of food and raiment!—not sufficient, that an impudent coxcomb takes me for the servant of my children, and threatens me, to my face, that he will beat

me like a slave!—not enough, that I am here suffering hunger, and weeping bitter tears, whilst you are running after your extravagant pleasures!—I shall die like a dog! For your sakes, despised and neglected by everybody, I shall go to the grave without one friend to pity or lament me! But, enough! the measure is full! You shan't go out!—and if you do not lay these gay dresses aside immediately, I will crush you under my feet, like monsters as you are!”

A burst of laughter responded to the father's indignant words, and convinced him, that his abandoned children had no faith either in his

power, or his will, to punish them. The son haughtily walked up to the door, and tried to push his father by force away from it. Then followed a scene of undutifulness, too disgusting to be described.

Some moments afterwards, Jules and Hortense Spinael left the house; and from their red-hot faces, as well as the trouble they took to arrange their disordered dress, it could be plainly seen that they had just come out of a hard scuffle; notwithstanding they laughed in scorn, as though they had conquered a despicable enemy, and hastened to meet their travelling companions, in order to throw themselves headlong into the

foolish dissipation of the capital. Meanwhile, the unhappy father was trying to stanch the blood which trickled down his face.

A month afterwards, on a Saturday, father Van Roosemael sat in a back room, making up his accounts out of a great ledger. For more than an hour he had exerted himself energetically to find three farthings, which were wanting to balance his accounts. His forehead was burning from ardent zeal, and his brains were already muddled, when, despairingly, he exclaimed,—“Why! —the figures are bewitched! All these items, added together, make sixty-five guilders, eight stivers, and

five farthings; and upon the paper I cannot get more than two farthings. I might drop these three farthings, and give them up, but that is not the question; let every one get what belongs to him, then the evil one gets nothing. Let us try once more!"

At the very moment when Van Roosemael began anew to hunt after these three farthings, the door opened, and in came a person with gentle tread. The shopkeeper, in surprise, jumped up from his chair, and looked attentively at the comer, without, however, speaking a single word. The man, who hardly ventured two paces into the room, bore

marks of the deepest misery: thin, pale, with dishevelled hair, torn clothes, and unblacked shoes, he stood like one who implored charity. Van Roosemael, at first, did not recognise him, and regarded him with a searching look. The man reddened under his glance, and two large tears fell from between his eyelashes.

“Master Spinael, what do you want from me?” the shopkeeper suddenly exclaimed, distrustingly; “do you come hither, again to borrow money from me? in that case, you had better quickly leave my house, for I am not at home for any thing of the kind.”

“Mr. Van Roosemael,” the other sobbed, “I do not come hither to borrow, or to ask money from you. Did you know how wretched I am, you would not disown me; every



one despises me; and I have not even the consolation of talking about my misery to anybody. I have cheated you, Van Roosemael, but you

were once my friend; do not deny me, at least, your pity now!"

Van Roosemael heard the entreating voice of Spinael with great surprise; he at once perceived that he had no longer to dread any imposition from that quarter; and that a load of unfeigned misery had fallen on the man who had long been his intimate friend and brother.

His innate generosity of heart prevailed; the tears stood in his eyes too; he caught Spinael's hand, moved a chair close to him, and said: "You are unhappy, friend, I see! Well, all is forgotten! Sit down and speak; what can I do for you? Do not be

afraid; I am determined to assist you, at whatever cost!"

"The only boon I beg of you is, that you permit me to give you the tale of my misfortune, and to pour my sorrows into the heart of the only sincere friend I ever had.

"For many years I have shunned you, Van Roosemael; not that I did not esteem and love you, but because I had a guilty conscience, and did not dare to expose myself to the eyes of an upright and honest man. Now I am so far reduced that I must leave my fatherland like a vagabond, to conceal my disgrace and poverty in a foreign country. I am proud enough, Van Roosemael,

to believe, that you will forgive me before I depart, never to behold again the place of my birth!"

These words, uttered in a voice broken by sobs, deeply affected the shopkeeper; with evident sympathy he caught Spinael's hand and said: "You are unhappy, I have no doubt—but leave your native country!—No, Spinael, no! Only do not despair: true it is, that in my business I look sharply after every farthing, because, without exactness it won't go on; but that cannot prevent me helping, in his necessity, the best friend I ever had! God forbid that I should draw back in such a case. Speak, therefore, Spinael; speak

openly; you will give me great joy, for I am determined to befriend you."

A smile of gratitude brightened the shoemaker's pale face, tears rolled faster down his cheeks, and with broken accents, he said: "I thank God for prompting me to seek my last consolation from you, Van Roosemael. For upwards of a year this is my first happy moment—God bless you for it! But mark my words now, and you will see yourself, that it is impossible to lend me any assistance but that of friendly pity. You know the folly which led me to ape fashionable manners; I have renounced the custom of my

country and the Flemish uprightness, to seek my fortune in deceit; and I staked, in this hazardous game, the fruits of my former industry against false appearances. The proverb, friend, which says, 'Better one bird in the hand, than two in the bush,' is a truism. Would I had comprehended it! But the great misfortune was, that other victims, my own children, shared in the delusion, imbibing the poison of an evil education. This is the chief source of my deep misery. Had I never placed my daughter Theresa in a fashionable boarding-school, I should be Master Spinael still—But what is the matter,

Van Roosemael—you grow pale—
you tremble!"

"Never mind, go on, I only thought of Siska, who also is in a fashionable boarding-school."

"Fetch her back! Van Roosemael; I entreat you, fetch her home! You will hardly know her now!"

"Perhaps you may be right, friend—but go on; I want to know whether I cannot be of use to you."

"Well, then, Van Roosemael, I still had enough common sense left to enable me to escape with a whole skin, as soon as I saw the danger approaching. But the fashionable education acknowledges neither parents nor children. I was their servant

and they the masters ; they have been feasting, drinking, playing, dancing, till all was gone ; even then they have continued their revels, contracted debts, sold all my goods and chattels, and with all that, treated me like a fool and simpleton, and laughed at me when I made the attempt of bringing them back to their senses. They have beaten me, Van Roosemael ; beaten me till the blood gushed over my face !—I have been ill in consequence of it ; and they have left me alone in my misery, as if they longed for my death !”

Here Spinael was silent ; his voice, at the last words, had assumed a hollow sound, which clearly betray-

ed how heavily the recital of this misdeed oppressed his heart; his friend, too, was silent; he could not believe what he had heard.

“And now,” continued Spinael, “when my house is empty, as if it had never been inhabited; when they have carried away every thing, to the very cover of my bed, they have left me! My daughter, whom I loved so dearly, whom, in spite of her bad conduct, I love still, my Theresa, now keeps company with a strolling player at Brussels. My son John, your wretched godson, has returned to Paris. As far as I am concerned, friend Van Roose-mael, I must fly the country; I find

a creditor in every face, to taunt me either with cheating or beggary. With misfortune my feelings of honor have returned; I cannot go on living as I do—and how could I remedy it? Nobody will give me employment; none of the master-shoemakers will take me as a journeyman. I have got nothing to eat; no coverlet on my bed; no clothes; my house is rented by other parties—I must quit it the day after tomorrow. Alas! Van Roosemael, I wanted to soar high and have fallen low, as you may see!"

Van Roosemael, with a tear in his eye, had listened to his friend's story; when Spinael was silent he

said, half out of humor: “But, Spinael, I do not know why you conceal from me what I am anxious to know. You say you must leave the country; I do not see that. A genuine friend can do much, if he has the will. Let us hear what is the amount of your debts.”

“I understand you!” exclaimed Spinael with astonishment. “But I will not consent. Happy enough am I, that I have found one man at least, who considers me worthy of his assistance! Let us part, Van Roosemael; I will work like a slave; and if I am unable to discharge all my debts before I leave this world, the good will, at least,

shall not have been wanting. Give me your hand, for a last consoling adieu; and pray sometimes for my children, friend!"

Of a sudden, the grocer appeared to relinquish his intention. He rose from his chair, and said:—"If you do not consent, I cannot help you. But you will not refuse to take a glass of wine with me before you go; I have a good bottle from *anno eleven** left in my cellar. Sit down, Spinael; do not lose courage. A good deal of water flows down the Scheldt in a year: misfortune comes quickly; but fortune too, often comes

* The year 1811, as all the world knows—the comet year—was famous for its vintage.

unexpectedly. God knows; you must not despair. Sit down."

With these words he went to the cellar; and, returning in a few mo-



ments, he placed two tumblers on the table, filled them to the brim, and said:—"Now come, Spinael, if we must needs part, your health and

good luck ! A good glass of wine, ain't it ? Well, if you will not on any account accept my assistance, you might tell me at least what your debts amount to, and how you intend to discharge them. There is not much to be earned at hand-work, if a little trade is not connected with it, as you well know yourself."

"I well know that ; and there is no doing impossibilities ! But, for the satisfaction of my own conscience, I will save the bread from my own mouth, to discharge yearly part of my debts ; and who knows, if God grants me a long life, whether I may not succeed at last in clear-

ing off my debts entirely; for six hundred guilders may well be saved in twenty years by halfpence!"

"Six hundred guilders, you say?—Dutch guilders?"

"No; of Brabant. I owed much more than that; but when my house was sold, each creditor contrived to catch part of it."

"Six hundred guilders of Brabant, without plack or farthing!"

"Sixteen stivers and seven farthings! You see, I know my account by heart!"

"Let us have another glass of wine, Spinael. No doubt, it is possible to get as much as that together; and your children will surely

reform. We were young ourselves once, Spinael: you can't put an old head on young shoulders, says the proverb. But I see we have got nothing to eat with our wine. Wait a minute; I will fetch some cracknels."

Van Roosemael stayed away for a long time,—longer than was necessary to fetch such a trifle. Returning at last, he placed a plateful of cracknels on the table, and said, in a serious tone, to the perplexed shoemaker:—"Spinael, we grew up together as neighbors' children. Your father was the best friend of my father: we have played together; and we have been inseparable.

like brothers, to our fortieth year. You have never been my enemy, or else you would not have told me your misfortunes. I have always been your friend, or your misery would not force the tears from my eyes. I have therefore the right to assist you in your needs, and to lend you some money at least for your journey. But, as good accounts make the best friends, I must request you to give me a receipt for the money which I am going to lend you. Look here; here is a receipt already made out; sign it without reading the contents. I cannot permit you to set out on your journey with five or ten guilders, and suffer

hardships on that account; and, in order to prevent every contradiction on your part, I request you, as a friend, to do me the favor of signing it unread."

Spinael, who had not a farthing left, and was perhaps, in his heart, pleased to meet so unexpectedly with a generous friend, pressed the grocer's hand, took the pen, and signed. Van Roosemael took the receipt away from under his hand, raised his glass, and cried:—"Here is to your success in our dear native country, friend!—and, once more, success to your new shop! Now come, respond to this sincere wish! Do not stare at me in such

a manner. Spinael, you are caught, caught, caught! Hurrah! hurrah!"

"I do not understand what you mean!" exclaimed Spinael in astonishment; "you laugh so merrily, that my own heart rejoices at it. But, come now, tell me what is going on!"

"What is going on? Look here, for how much you have given me a receipt!" So saying, he held the paper at some distance from Spinael, and pointed with his finger to the margin, where, in large figures, the number "1000" was written.

"A thousand guilders!" Spinael cried, grasping for the paper, without being able to catch it.

“Yes, one thousand guilders!”
Van Roosemael triumphantly rejoined, throwing some bills of exchange and a bag with money upon the table;—“and here is the money!”

“I will not! Oh! do not compel me to take this money!” sobbed the shoemaker, whose tears, from deep emotion, began to course in streams down his cheeks. “Oh! don’t think that this was the purport of my visit!”

“But you will not be so silly as to leave me the receipt, without having had the money? Pray hear me, Spinael! Joy overpowers me! But we must now talk seriously. I am rich; Siska, my only child, will nev-

er suffer want, if she does not herself seek it. Our shop yields several thousands per annum. We possess both landed and funded property. What then are a thousand guilders to me? Nothing!—for a few months a little closer attention to business. And, for the sake of such a trifle, should I permit my only friend to wander through the wide world? Understand rightly what I mean: you satisfy your creditors immediately; from enemies they will become your friends. There is an empty house of mine round the corner, which you will occupy: you buy a stock of leather, and engage journeymen; I will assist you until

your business answers. Over your shop write nothing but, 'John Spinael, Shoemaker ;' produce good work in honesty and uprightness. I will recommend you plenty of customers ; and, as there is no term fixed in the receipt you have signed, for repayment, you will be able to pay me back the loan in good time. If, then, your children shall have grown wiser by misfortune, they will return of their own accord, and seek your forgiveness. And now, friend Spinael, put soon a decent coat on again ; for, to-morrow evening, after business, we shall go to the Stone bridge, drink a glass of ale, and have a game at backgam-

mon;—I will give a hundred odds, if you like."

"Should I accept of so much kindness?" exclaimed Spinael, as if beside himself.

"Come to my arms!" replied Van Roosemael. "My happiness this day I prize higher than the gain of ten thousand guilders! Hasten to my arms, friend Spinael!"

The two friends embraced each other amid tears of joy, and remained so speechless for some moments. They then emptied, still without speaking, each a glass of wine to the very bottom. At last Van Roosemael said, somewhat composed,—"Spinael, you will please

not to talk to my wife about this matter. Women are, no doubt, also generous, but in their own particular way; they seldom like their husbands to be so: you will pay the rent of the house to her, and, in other respects, act as if you did not know any thing. But beware, for the future, of the young fashionable gentlemen, of blessed memory!"

"No fear on that head, my dear friend: a donkey does not stumble twice against the same stone; when the well is covered, the calf won't fall in a second time. I know those birds; they are full of tricks and nicks; and I am so heartily tired of them, that an order from

one of them would not suit me at all!"

"Stay, Spinael; do not carry it too far. The foreigners who are settled here in Antwerp, as burghers and traders, I know to be all very honest people; and many of them I number amongst my best customers. But the hungry rats, who have overrun us since the year 1830, as if this country were a new Utopia, they are the scoundrels whom you must keep your eye upon. Come now, let us have a look at your new lodging; it is a pretty house, man! Pocket your money and the bills."

A few days afterwards Spinael

took possession of the house which Van Roosemael had let to him. The shop was well stocked with shoes and leather; two journeymen sat at work at Spinael's side. In the course of a few months he had already many customers, partly because he produced good work, and partly owing to Van Roosemael's urgent recommendations. Every Sunday the two friends took a walk to the Stone bridge; and in the evenings, after business was over, they had their game of backgammon;—in a word, they had returned to all their old habits, and, but for the mournful state of Spinael's chil-

dren, they might have even derived pleasure from the contemplation of the past.





CHAPTER IV.

FASHIONABLE BEAU, MERE SHOW.

FATHER VAN ROOSEMAEL availed himself of the unfortunate conduct and fate of Hortense Spinael, to induce his wife to recall Siska. Doctor Pelkmans lent him every as-

sistance therein. At last, after Siska had been at the fashionable boarding-school for three full years, and had last year refused to spend the vacation with her parents, the mother acceded to the wish of her husband and the doctor. A letter was written, to thank her teachers for what they had done; and apprized Siska, that, on the 15th instant, at four o'clock in the afternoon, her mother would wait her arrival at the railway station.

That day the weather was very beautiful. About half an hour before the arrival of the train, an elderly lady was seen at the station. She was cleanly dressed, wore an

old-fashioned cap, trimmed with costly lace; and a cloak of fine cloth. But you could easily perceive that she was a burgher's wife, dressed in her Sunday clothes; and who, therefore, had secured herself against the possible danger of bad weather by an umbrella of unusually large dimensions.

The heart of Mrs. Van Roosemael—for it was she—beat high from maternal affection; for she was soon to embrace her dear Siska; to press to her bosom her darling child; and thus to receive a full compensation for all the disputes, the sorrows, and the troubles she had had to go through, to insure to her daughter a

brilliant education. Oh! what joy she will experience!

Ha! there the roaring train is coming up. From all sides the officials rush forward, out of corners, nooks, and warehouses. The iron voice of the monster engine changes the silent station into a bustling field; and amid innumerable shouts and cries, the machine stops. Now that the happy moment of meeting approaches, the maternal heart beats louder. The old lady stands at the entrance of the terminus and scrutinizes the features of all the females that pass by. Already the carriages are driving to the town; one after the other the heavy om-

nibuses join them, and in less than a few minutes the iron horse is stabled, the servants returned into their dens, the travellers vanished, and the silence of death restored. Mother Van Roosemael sees the gates close; deep sorrow is swelling her heart, a painful sigh escapes from her bosom; she has not seen her dear Siska, still she remains as if a secret power fixed her to the gate, and long would she perhaps have remained there, lost in sad meditation, if she had not seen, at a little distance, a young lady standing near a cab, in the attitude of one who was waiting for somebody.

Could she be her Siska? Impossible! She is a young lady of quality: her splendid silk gown leaves bare a great part of her neck; a gauze shawl, to be sure, seems intended to cover, but does not conceal it; at each movement long ringlets are dancing round her cheeks; from her costly bonnet a grand plume of feathers is waving, her hand holds a pretty little parasol; a score of boxes, of various shapes and sizes, and two large trunks, are piled at her feet. That is not Siska!

Such are the observations which mother Van Roosemael is making, and the thought that creeps into her

afflicted mind. Suddenly the young lady makes a sign of impatience, in the direction of the matron, and in doing so, shows her features more



distinctly. Heavens ! it is Siska ; and look ! the old stiff mother jumps towards her, like a young girl ; tears gush from her eyes, a smile brightens her features, she opens her arms, and

ejaculates with touching joy: “ Oh! Siska, my child!”

But it seems that the young lady is ashamed of the name Siska; she blushes. But the blush soon passes over, and she takes two steps up to her mother, who tries to throw both arms round the neck of her child; but see! the fashionable daughter will not make a scene for the spectators; she seizes the hands of her mother, holds them, and by this means prevents the embrace. Then she says, “ Good-day, mamma; how do you do? and how is papa? Take care, you will tread upon my boxes. I have been waiting here for you the last half hour.”

Under different circumstances such frigid, heartless words might have passed unnoticed; but in the present moment they pierced, like so many daggers, the loving heart of the mother. And was this, in truth, the language she was entitled to expect from her Siska, after a separation of a whole year? Not a single kiss, not one pressure of the hand, for her, who, to comply with Siska's will, had for three long years lived in discord with her good husband? —for her, who had founded all her hopes on the love of her only child? How must this formal behavior have pained her! The poor old lady with both hands cov-

ered her eyes, and burst into bitter tears!

But all natural feeling was not so far dead in Siska, that she could have seen her mother's grief without pity; on the contrary, her better nature prevailed. She threw her arms round her mother's neck, and kissed both her cheeks with so much more fervor, because it broke through a falsely assumed self-command. Now the old woman was consoled and happy; enviously she held her child clasped to her breast, and gazed into her eyes with ardent affection,—“O Siska! my dear Siska!” she repeated, trembling with emotion. “Should not our life num-

ber many such moments, and lasting ones besides?" But, O sad mishap! there is some one laughing; Siska hears it, looks round, and perceives a sneer on the face of a young gen-



tleman, who, as a scornful spectator, seems to watch the affectionate scene between the mother and daughter. A deep blush immediate-

ly mounts to the cheeks of the girl; she disengages herself from the embrace of her mother, and again assumes an attitude of indifference. The boxes in the mean time had been placed in the cab, which was crammed so full, that there was no possibility of two persons being able to sit in it. As Siska was infinitely concerned about all the modish finery which was packed in those numerous boxes, and was afraid they might be spoiled or rumpled, she ordered the cabman, who lived in the neighborhood of her father, to drive off with her luggage, intending to walk to town. Are we mistaken, if we say that pride and vanity

ty had their share in this resolution, and that the vain girl was anxious to make a show of her elegant attire before her Antwerp acquaintances? Siska opened her parasol, assumed an easy carriage, and walked towards the town, without tendering any more proofs of filial affection to her mother. This chilling modish behavior caused much pain to the good mother; she could not bring herself to accuse her child of wilful malice; but however powerfully maternal love took her part, she could not but feel that the doctor had been no bad adviser. In her gloomy thoughts she walked along like a servant, who follows

her mistress. The silence had endured some time, and the two women were already within the gates, when Siska, regarding her mother from top to toe in a singular manner, said to her,—“But, mamma, how oddly you are dressed! One would think that you were a poor woman, with this ugly cap and old-fashioned cloak. I really am ashamed of you. Hide this old-fashioned countrified umbrella beneath your cloak, for we look just like peasants coming from their village.”

Mrs. Van Roosemael replied with a trembling voice, betraying her inward sorrow,—“Siska, my child, you must not be so fastidious; I am

dressed as my mother dressed before me, and cannot be expected to change my garments now in my old age. Say no more about it; people ought to mind their own concerns, and we do not owe money to anybody!"

Whilst her mother thus spoke, Siska had her eyes fixed upon the passers by, to see whether her personal charms produced any effect. She was highly delighted if some young loungers seemed to speak flatteringly about her to each other, and, by the expression of their features, seemed to say,—"What a beautiful girl she is!" The poor mother ventured to ask her daugh-

ter whether she was not tired of the boarding-school, and whether she would not prefer being at home with her parents, and so on; but however much she exerted herself to commence an affectionate and familiar conversation, it was to no purpose; the vain girl thought of nothing but giving her steps the proper grace, and gathering the praises which she thought she could read in the looks of those they met.

At the milk-market a young gentleman accosted her with smiling face, and with such an air of intimacy, that one might have thought they were brother and sister. Mrs. Van Roosemael opened her eyes as

wide as possible, to see if she could recognise the young man; in vain—she never had seen him before. But he was not at all disconcerted by the piercing glance of the mother, but stepped close up to Siska, and said, with pinched lips, in French:—"Ah! bon jour, Mademoiselle Eudoxie! So you have left the school? Antwerp will now have the felicity of possessing so bewitching a creature within its walls! Verily, a precious gain for us poor young men, who are bemoaning the scarcity of such a union of attractions!"

On this, Siska, casting a languishing glance upon him from beneath

her eyelashes, and at the same time assuming an appearance of confusion, replied: "You are in jest, Mr. George! But how is your sister Clotilda?"

"Oh! very well indeed," said the young gentleman with a great deal of indifference; then, with an ironical expression in his features, and pointing to the old lady, he said: "Is this your servant?"

This question made Siska color all over; she was ashamed of her good mother, the fashionable doll! Her confusion lasted some time; and at last with great embarrassment and unwillingness, she replied: "No! she is my mother!"

“Ah! indeed!” the young man exclaimed; and, turning to the mother, he bowed stiffly, and said: “Will you permit me to make you my compliments, Madame Van Rosmal.* You have got a charming daughter!”

The old lady did not understand him, but she saw clearly enough what was going on, and that she was the subject of his impudent mockery. She nevertheless returned his bow, by a movement of her head. The young man took his leave, with these words to Siska: “Poor woman! she is quite right in

* The name of Van Roosemael in the French pronunciation.

sheltering you under her wide cloak. There are so many of us who have a great mind to steal you. *Au revoir, Mademoiselle Eudoxie!*"

With anxious fears the mother had seen all this; and most probably would have given vent to her feelings in reproaches, if her breast had not been oppressed by a painful sensation. Evidently annoyed, she said: "Whom does the fashionable monkey take us for? He must have taken you for some one else, for he called you Eudoxie, and addressed me as Madame Van Rosmal! How can you endure to hear the shallow talk of a puppy, whom you do not know?"

These words were not at all to Siska's liking, as could be easily seen from her pouting mouth. In a tone of somewhat contemptuous pity, she replied: "You imagine perhaps that I have spent three years in a fashionable boarding-school, to return as uncouth and awkward as when I entered it? This young gentleman is an acquaintance of mine; his sister Clotilda is my dearest friend, and he used to come to see her!"

"Is it possible that he is Peter Vandertangen?" asked the mother.

"Yes, it is Mr. Vandertangen!"

"And you are not ashamed, Siska, to make so much ado with the son

of your father's barber? with the idle fellow who can do nothing but feed upon his father, and lounge about?"

"But, mamma, that does not prevent his having acquired good manners. He has lived at Paris; and, though but a hairdresser, he is a very agreeable young man, who knows the world."

"Why, is that knowing the world, forsooth, to do nothing but to loiter about and grieve one's parents? I tell you, then, that I will not have you form acquaintance with such brazen braggarts; and as to your name, it is Siska, like mine. Heaven knows from what heathenish

calendar you may have picked up that absurd name of Eudoxie!"

Siska, much annoyed by these words, sharply replied; "Is it my fault, that the ladies altered my vulgar name? And I had much rather be called Eudoxie Van Rosmal, than perpetually to have my ears offended by the coarse peasant's name of Francisca Van Roosemael!"

Unhappy mother! The thought of the conduct of Hortense Spinael immediately rushed into her mind, and bewildered forebodings of a similar fate for her Siska, made her limbs shake violently. She certainly would have told her daughter

some still more bitter truths, but they now stood before the door of their shop, and entered. Nobody was in it but Van Roosemael, who was busy grinding coffee. Now, Siska did not find any difficulty in embracing her father, as no strangers' eyes were fixed upon her to make her blush. The good man was all joy, and kissed his gaudily-dressed daughter with unfeigned delight. But these marks of affection were prematurely brought to an end by Siska, who exclaimed, in French: “Mamma, *ma chambre!* I cannot leave my boxes in the shop. Take them up stairs, cabman!”

An hour afterwards Siska had

locked herself up in her own room, and was busily employed in unpacking her many bonnets and dresses, arranging her pomatum pots and scent bottles, and papering her curls. Her voice could be heard in the shop, as she warbled the everlasting French refrain of—

“O ma belle, sois moins cruelle!”

and others of the same description.*

Father Van Roosemael stood con-

* We say *of* the same description: viz., childish French songs, the rhymes of which are constantly the following:—

amour	belle	tendresse
retour.	cruelle.	allégresse.
charmes	douleur	âme
larmes.	coeur.	flamme.
jolie	revoir	ta vue
ravie,	espoir.	émue, etc.

fused behind his counter; his right hand rested on the handle of the coffee-mill, and with the left he scratched his head, like a helpless man; his eyes stared vacantly into



the shop; painful reflections engrossed his mind. He too thought of Hortense Spinael, and murmured from time to time: "What a block-

head I have been ! I had better have broken the head of my obstinate wife ! Doctor Pelkmans spoke the truth when he said that I would one day scratch my head. But complaints are of no avail now ; they are bad plasters for death !"

The state of the poor mother was a wretched one ; tortured by fears, anxieties, and pangs of conscience, she sat in a half dark corner of her kitchen, and shed bitter tears proportionate to her gloomy thoughts.

But tears and complaints were of as little avail as exhortations and entreaties ; Siska persisted in her evil ways. The maternal tenderness of Mrs. Van Roosemael gradu-

ally began to prevail; and from the pains which she took to excuse Siska with the indignant father, she ended with seeing nothing wrong in her conduct; some whims, perhaps, and a little obstinacy, but nothing really bad. Why, the girl is still young, time will improve her. By this indulgence she gained more marks of love from her daughter, whom she delighted to speak of to her customers: "Our Siska has learned very much, neighbor; she understands French better than Flemish. She is a jewel of a girl."

And, no doubt, like all burghers' daughters who are educated in very fashionable boarding-schools, Siska

had a very pretty education. She knew enough of French to exchange silly compliments, and to talk of *l'amour* and *la toilette*. To be sure, she bungled the French language rather in conversation, but her boldness and easy carriage made ample amends for her faults. Of arithmetic she knew nothing; but then arithmetic is far too dry and tedious a science for such a delicate lady; she was unable to sum up an account, she only knew enough to understand that if she had three lovers at a time she could very well afford to lose one without being abandoned altogether. Of geography her memory had retained nothing, but

that Paris is the finest town in the world, the Utopia of young ladies, where a continual revelling is going on, where there are ten times as many places of amusement as churches, where pomatum and pleasures are invented. Of mythology she had been taught nothing, but that the name of the goddess of love is Venus, and that the dear little Cupid is her son. She further knew the French names of all dresses and stuffs; of ornaments for the hair, cosmetics, perfumes, and essences; and all kinds of confectionery. Behold! therein consists Siska's education. And now I ask you whether she was a

jewel of a girl, or a fashionable doll?

Father Van Roosemael would not have answered this question favorably, as may be guessed from the following words, which he addressed to Doctor Pelkmans about that period: "Had we followed your advice, Doctor, our Siska now would stand happy and contented behind the counter; she would love us, and we would exert ourselves to leave her a handsome fortune and a flourishing business. But how do matters stand now? She is sitting in the shop with a silk apron on, and a magnificent head-dress, without a cap; she chatters and laughs

all day long with the young fops and penniless puppies, who, under the pretext of trying cigars, overrun my house, and drive the good customers off. Half of my best customers I have lost already. Friend Pelkmans, when I am dead, the shop of my father will be ruined; for Siska will never stoop to marry a man of her own position in life, and what are the frivolous youngsters good for? You were right, doctor; a solid, homely education would have made my Siska a good saving housewife; made her acquainted with all things useful; taught her to fear God, and lead a retired life; but no! she must needs go to a fashionable boarding-

school, and learn French. It is possible, but nevertheless hardly credible, that such an education may be fit for the child of a millionaire. But what I know for certain is, that it ruins an honest citizen's child. But so it always happens, doctor! When the calf is drowned, the well is covered over; and the affair ends as you have predicted."

CHAPTER V.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

FROM the first day of her return to the paternal roof, Siska criticised and found fault with every thing under it. All that her good parents did, she found vulgar and improper ; and as she was well versed in all the tricks and arts of dissimulation, she moulded and bent the will of her parents like softened wax.

How could she dine before three o'clock ? Had she the stomach of a peasant ? At this declaration the father grew angry, the mother grieved, because all their lifetime

they had dined at this their wonted hour, and were afraid of a change, which would entirely upset their arrangements for the day. But Siska became sulky, and looked sour ; but there was no help for it. Her father showed himself inexorable on this matter. Siska wept, until her eyes were red ; this, too, was of no avail, although the fond mother from mere pity now supported her. Then Siska began to swoon ; she fell into violent hysterics, and behaved as though about to leave the world. A fashionable physician, expert in the capricious maladies of highly educated ladies, knew how to narrate so many horrors, caused by exciting

the weak nerves of the female sex, that the frightened parents at last resolved to dine at three o'clock. Often did they now endure craving hunger, as regularly rising at four or five o'clock in the morning they had to pass so many hours, whilst the lazy, comfort-loving Siska never made her appearance before nine o'clock.

And then the kitchen—what miserable cookery! Nothing but potatoes and cabbage and beef, boiled or roast; always the same. Siska, of late, feels so very weak, so very poorly! She must have a pigeon or a roast fowl; such things will be a relish, and agree better with her.

Her pockets are always full of lozenges, and not without reason; for the poor child has got so many different aches—heart-ache, headache, nervous-ache, ache everywhere. Alas, poor Siska!

To go with her mother to market at six o'clock of a morning, she cannot by any means during the winter, it is too cold; and in summer she cannot mix with the vulgar people, it would make her sick. The sermon on Sundays of her good pastor lasts far too long, she gets cold feet on the stone pavement; but to gaze round her at the congregation, that is her delight,—there she sees fine toilettes which she tries to ape, and

afterwards she can take her walk over the green churchyard, and show her beautiful new mantilla to the young gentlemen of *bon ton*, (consisting chiefly of journeymen tailors, cigar manufacturers, and shopboys.)



And see! she has forced her mother to exchange her laced cap for a silk bonnet, and to wear laced-boots,

otherwise she must decline showing herself anywhere with her in public. But how unhappy mother Van Roosemael looks in her new head-dress! It frets her ears perpetually, for she is not accustomed to the rustling of the stiff bonnet lining; and more than this, she can scarce advance three steps without making movements with her laced-boots, like one entangled in a noose, so averse are the laces to make acquaintance with her feet. Poor woman! her neighbors laugh whilst she is perspiring from vexation, and for very shame could sink into the earth. But forget not the beautiful source of her patience; it is the

mother's love enduring all things for her child.

But still more than the mother was the poor father tortured by the whimsical Siska. Till then he had always been master in his house, and had managed his affairs so prudently that things had never gone wrong with him. Now he clearly foresaw that they must fall into confusion; but his voice was little heeded in the government of the house. What he considered good and proposed, his daughter rejected; and she often gave him to understand that she believed his ideas to be narrow and stupid. If, in consequence of this, the old man became

angry, a complete uproar and rebellion broke out in the house; he on the one side, Siska and her mother on the other. But it is well known that man is a powerless child compared to woman if quarrel and dissensions begin; he gets fierce, hits valiantly the table, and grinds his teeth; but has he ever been known to have the last word? Certainly not; let him storm as he will, the wife gains the day.

Doctor Pelkmans had been handled so roughly, that he took a dislike to the house and avoided it carefully.

Father Van Roosemael had not grown up amongst quarrels and ani-

mosities; he considered peace and quiet as the greatest boons on earth, and he at last passed over a great many things which were disagreeable to him in order to avoid a useless fight of words. His mind however suffered much from this constant constraint, and the sudden revolution of his whole household; and often a friend would say in saluting him, "How thin you have become, Van Roosemael! Are you ill?"

In one point only the good man had hitherto succeeded in gaining the victory, namely, in the attacks which Siska now directed towards the shop itself. It ought, it must be altered! But this required a greater amount

of trouble and artifice. Behind the counter Van Roosemael had grown up, yonder the chair stood upon which his mother had nursed him, that gayly painted jar and that japanned box he had smiled at before he could speak. There was no crack, no mark, which did not awaken some fond juvenile recollections. With regard to that broken china pot, his father had given it to him a day before his death, with so striking an admonition on economy, that it was even now indelibly impressed on his memory. The black spots on that green cask yonder came from his own little hands, because that was the cask

from which his mother had frequently given him a piece of sugar; and the child therefore had been in the habit of patting and caressing it. Yonder on that table the initials



“J. S.” are cut; they mean John and Siska, and are in commemoration of his first and only love. In short, this shop was the place of his birth, his world; every thing in it was a part of himself, of his very life.

But who could tell what floods of

tears Siska shed, how often she swooned away, for how many days she abstained from food, in how many fits she had fallen, to overcome the inexorable decision of her father, and to alter the shop after the Paris fashion? Yes, this had lasted a whole year; twelve months, full of quarrelling, of domestic vexations and parental affliction had passed away, until Van Roosemael, like a beaten soldier, with bent head and tears in his eyes, said, "Well, then, have your will!"

But these words—like his own sentence of death—pierced him to the heart, and broke up both mind and body; he began to pine away,

became pale and weak, and was apparently tottering into his grave, from some unknown disease. Siska often shook like a willow when the flashing eye of her old father caught her own; but he did not speak, the broken-hearted man, he stared motionless at the workmen who were busy knocking the old shop down. All his dearest recollections he saw destroyed; and in proportion as they were vanishing under the brush of the painter, his breath and his life grew shorter. The simple shop was very soon transformed into a magnificent warehouse; every thing glittered with gilding and varnish; the counter was ornament-

ed with little angels that ground coffee, smoked cigars, or weighed tobacco; the window-panes were as large as mirrors, and covered with French inscriptions, lighted with bright gas-lamps. A shopman and an assistant stood behind the counter with folded arms; and Siska, or rather Mademoiselle Eudoxie Van Rosmal, was sitting on a little elevation near the window, and read French novels.

This state of things went on for a long while, to the great dismay of the afflicted father. He had now come to the point when every thing, even the friendship of Spinael, appeared indifferent to him. Spinael,

by the advice of Van Roosemael, had set up a business in hides and skins, and thereby had made much money, so that he would have been able to return the loan of the thousand florins, if Van Roosemael had not firmly refused to take it. Of his children Spinael had not heard any thing since they had left him. Whilst in the shop every thing became more confused, father Van Roosemael was confined to his bed; but as he never complained of pains or sufferings whatsoever, it was believed to be an ordinary indisposition, and care and attention were considered sufficient. One morning, however, he wished that Doctor

Pelkmans and Spinael might be called before him. The doctor promptly arrived, and remained for a long while alone with the patient. What there passed between them, and what they spoke of, we cannot tell. At last, after an hour's time, somebody was heard coming down the stairs, and the doctor stepped into the shop. His countenance was deadly pale, the which his dark garments seemed to heighten, his eyes sparkled, his cheeks were contracted spasmodically like those of an angry man, and through the opening of his cloak his fist seemed clenched. From the moment of his entering the shop, he kept his flash-

ing glances riveted on Siska, and walked up to her like a ghost. She, full of anguish and terror, stretched



both her hands towards him, as if to ward off that sinister apparition; the doctor, however, grasped her arm, and, pressing it hard, exclaim-

ed in a terrible voice: "Your father is dying, degenerate child, and you have murdered him!"

Then he left her almost swooning on her seat, walked out of the house to fetch a clergyman, and quickly returned with him and the clerk.

After the dying Van Roosemael had received the last consolations of the church, and the good pastor had departed, he groaned,—"My child! my Siska! I want to see her, doctor,—but be merciful,—do not punish her with words too severe!"

"I am going to fetch her—but she must be punished, she must have her heart made sad. Perhaps you

may then look from heaven down upon your repentant and virtuous child!"

With these words he opened the door, and went down to the kitchen. There mother and daughter sat and cried, with their hands before their eyes. The pitiable appearance of Siska might have softened a heart of stone; sighs, groans, and a fearful moaning heaved her bosom. Alas! this time her grief was not affected. The crushing words which the doctor had thundered into her ear, like the curse of her offended God, had torn the veil from her eyes! The name of parricide, which, in fiery characters, was perpetually

hovering before her eyes, seared her heart like a brand !

The heavy steps of the doctor caused her to look up with terror, and she sees him again before her like a messenger of vengeance. His piercing eye makes her heart quail, beneath his accusing look she feels her strength fail her, a cold thrill freezes the blood in her veins. Unable to turn herself away from the spell, she falls upon her knees, and, raising her hands, she exclaims : “Your wrath is just ! I am an unworthy, sinful creature ; but, in the name of my dying father, I crave your mercy !”

Two sparkling tears rolled over

the cheeks of the doctor, his face relaxed its stern expression of anger, and assumed that of the deepest affliction! He approached the sobbing girl, took her by the hand, and said, without raising her from the ground, "Siska! unhappy child! you have shamefully sinned against God! has he not said,—'Thou shalt respect father and mother!' and what have you done?—But cease your alarm; I shall not repeat the terrible word. There is yet one remedy left,—endeavor to amend the past; to conciliate your God and your dying father! Go up to him—dying, he calls for you—but take care! If he leaves this world

without being convinced of your repentance and reformation,—if he dies without consolation, without peace and hope for you, then the curse of the Lord will haunt you beyond this life!"

However bitter, however heart-rending these words were, Siska seemed to derive encouragement from them; with emotion she kissed the hands of the doctor, and, jumping up, she hastened to her father's room—"Thousand, thousand thanks!"

Shall I now describe the last solemn hour of the father, and the despair of the daughter! Shall I

show you Siska,—with tearful eyes and dishevelled hair, heart-broken and frantic with grief! Shall I tell you how she strikes her head against the death-bed of her father, until the blood gushed forth! How she endeavors to destroy her beauty, and lacerates her cheeks with her nails! How she tears into pieces, tramples upon, and destroys all the marks of her vanity and thoughtlessness! Oh! no! this spectacle is too painful, too touching.

Behold! the father dies!—but an expression of happiness brightens his countenance like that of a saint: his dying eyes, with a consolatory look, are fixed upon the bedside.

There Siska kneels, clinging round her mother with both her arms, kisses her affectionately, and entreats for mercy; the doctor stands opposite, and sheds tears of emotion. The dying man beholds this scene! he raises his feeble hand over the side of the bed—and lets it drop on the head of his child; then he speaks, whilst his soul unfolds its wings and soars from the earth to heaven, “My blessing upon thee, Siska! my child!”

The shop of a hundred years' standing is now shut up. Mother and daughter lead a life of solitude and repentance; with horror they

think of the cause of their misery, and to their litany they add the significant prayer,—“From the degeneracy and corruption of the world, deliver us, O Lord !”

I venture to hope, indulgent reader, that this true narrative may have engaged your attention, and you are, perhaps, anxious to see Siska.

Well, then, if such be your desire, go on a Friday morning, at about six o'clock, or perhaps a little later, to the church of the Dominicans, open the door on the right, and walk through the old churchyard as far as the Mount Calvary and the vaults. There you will see a young

woman kneeling, wrapped in a dark cloak, and her face covered by a veil. If you look attentively, you will observe the beads of a rosary gliding through her fingers, and now and then hear a sigh rising from under the veil as from a contrite spirit. She kneels however motionless, and in the twilight of the chapel will appear to you like a statue.

If, then, you see her rising and slowly leaving the vaults without having observed you, then you may boldly assert that you saw Siska Van Roosemael.

I shall not show you Spinael's daughter—there are places which

it is offensive to name. As to her brother, France has prisons enough to secure thieves and rogues !



